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Security-Risk Specialist

Otto Fred Otepka

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5—

Otto Fred Otepka, the husky, dark-eyed career civil servant who was ordered dismissed today as the State Department's chief security evaluator, has been called a victim of changing times, a target of technological unemployment. A craftsman in the specialized trade of sifting the backgrounds of others for compromising breaches of the accepted standards of patriotic conduct, Mr. Otepka has probably passed preliminary judgment on the security pedigrees of more ranking Government officials than any other person in Washington.

In 1953 he was recruited for the position he lost today from Scott McLeod, one of the State Department's most zealous investigators in the Eisenhower Administration's campaign to rid the Government of "security risks."

Mr. McLeod found Mr. Otepka in the Civil Service Commission and made him his chief evaluator of security clearances. Mr. Otepka held the post throughout the antismuggling campaign of the late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy.

"A stickler for detail and a hewer to the letter of the law," a former colleague has called Mr. Otepka. When his security recommendations were not sufficiently adverse to justify the removal of officials deemed "politically undesirable" by Mr. McLeod, Mr. Otepka resisted pressures to alter them.

'Calm and Deliberate'

"Some people in his line of work tend to be a little electric," a close associate of Mr. Otepka's has said. "When they speak, pinwheels go around. They are zealots—a little weird, a little frightening. But this man is calm, deliberate, articulate and cautious. He goes by the book."

"The book" in Mr. Otepka's case was Executive Order 10450, which established the Eisenhower Administration's security program, and which Mr. Otepka helped to write.

Mr. Otepka worked as a clerk in the Farm Credit Administration and the Internal Revenue Service here while he was attending law school at Columbus University, now the Law School of Catholic University.

After graduation in 1942 as a wartime investigator and



Associated Press

"Out of step"

security officer for the Civil Service Commission. He pursued the specialty for three years as an enlisted man in the Navy during World War II, and again at the Civil Service Commission until Mr. McLeod recruited him in 1953.

In 1960 his State Department efficiency report noted his "long experience with and extremely broad knowledge of laws, regulations, rules, criteria, and procedures in the field of personnel security. He is knowledgeable of Communism and its subversive efforts in the United States. To this he adds perspective, balance and good judgment."

The kernel of the present controversy, according to State Department officials, is that Mr. Otepka is "out of step with the times." "We are not witch hunting any more," a spokesman says, adding that "we have no security risks, and he knows it."

Mr. Otepka was born in Chicago on May 6, 1915. He and his wife, the former Edith Simmons, live in a modest home in Wheaton, Md., a Washington suburb. They have a daughter, Joanne, a 17-year-old freshman at Washington University in St. Louis.

Mr. Otepka has a workshop in his garage and recently finished his own basement recreation room. He has been a regular member of the State Department Bowling League, which meets at a downtown alley on Tuesday nights, with Secretary Dean Rusk sometimes bowling.